

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7791

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USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

UNCLAS CAIRO 11329

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: MASS MILI EG UK PFOR XF

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN PRESS TREATMENT OF POSSIBLE UK ARMS SALES TO EGYPT

REF: LONDON 17142

1. EGYPTIAN DAILIES NOVEMBER 8 PICK UP STORIES CITED REFTTEL, IN ADDITION TO CITING "INFORMED SOURCES IN LONDON", AND SPLASH STORIES OF NEGOTIATIONS FOR SALE OF 200 JAGUAR FIGHTER-BOMBERS ON FRONT PAGES, ALSO QUOTING 600 MILLION POUND STERLING PRICE AND STATING THAT SVERAL, UNNAMED, OIL-PRODUCING COUNTRIES WOULD UNDERWRITE COSTS OF DEAL, CITING AFP IN LONDON, NOVMEBER 8 AHRAH, IN ARTICLE MAINLY DEVOTED TO CHARACTERISTICS OF VARIOUS JAGUAR AIRCRAFT, MENTIONED THAT PURCHASE OF LARGE NUMBER OF ROCKET-FIRING, RADAR-EQUIPPED CHIEFTAIN TANKS UNDER NEGOTIATION, BUT COST FIGURES NOT INCLUDED IN ARTICLE. GUMHURRIYA NOVEMBER 8 ALSO CARRIES ARTICLE ON CHARACTERISTICS OF JAGUAR "AIRCRAFT OF TOMORROW", BY MILITARY EDITOR MUHAMMAD HUSAYN SHA'BAN.

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2. LOCAL DAILIES NOVEMBER 10, AFTER LOW-KEY TREATMENT OF ARMS ISSUE NOVEMBER 9, REPORT BRITISH DECISION TO BREAK OFFENSIVE ARMS EMBARGO AGAINST CONFRONTATION STATES, IN WAKE OF IMPROVED CONDITIONS AFTER SINAI II, AND COMMENT THAT EGYPT NOW ABLE TO BUY JAGUARS, RAPIER MISSILES, TANKS, AND NAVAL VESSELS, BUT NO SPECIFIC AMOUNTS OR FIGURES GIVEN, ALTHOUGH AKHBAR SPECULATES THAT FINAL SALES FIGURE MAY TOP ONE BILLION POUNDS STERLING.

3. COMMENT: STRESS BY EGYPTIAN PRESS NOVEMBER 10 ON FACT THAT EGYPT NOW FREE TO BUY BRITISH ARMS (RATHER THAN PREVIOUS EMPHASIS NOVEMBER 8 ON SPECIFIC FIGURES), COUPLED WITH "NO COMMENT" STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT SADAT WHEN ASKED ABOUT JAGUAR STORIES (REPORTED IN AHARAM NOVEMBER 9) GIVE IMPRESSION HERE THAT BRITISH HAVE AGREED TO SELL ARMS IN PRINCIPLE, BUT DETAILS OF SALE REMAIN TO BE WORKED OUT.
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